LUNCH CLUBS FOR NOONDAY USE ONLY ON INCREASE

Riddles of the French Menu Card Are Either Solved or Eliminated So One May Eat in Anglo-Saxon.

LUNCHING in a club is a growing New York fad. Although hard times are with us and the gastronomic exercises of the average business man are less fearful than they used to be, though cold bottles are diminishing in size and quantity, though Havana gloriosos are dwindling into Porto Rican panatelas, the number of lunch clubs is growing. There are twenty or more of them now, and another will shortly be born. At the beginning of May an entire floor of the Woolworth Building will probably be devoted to a most resplendent lunch club. Its members may be able to see friends in the Railroad or Machinery clubs in the twin wings of the Hudson Terminal Building. These in their turn can make out with a glass such friends as are lunching at the Whitehall Club, at the Battery.

Crossing town it is difficult to escape the Hardware Club, the Lawyers' Club, the Recess Club or the Arkwright Club, on Broadway. Reaching the financial district, we find the Midday Club, the Downtown Association, the Reform Club, the Fulton Club, the Merchants' Club, the Underwriters' Club and the Drug and Chemical Club. In the Stock Exchange is the Luncheon Club. In the Wool Exchange Building is the Wool Club. On the way uptown are the Aldine Association and the Carpet Club, near 23d st. Still further uptown is the Transportation Club, on the top floor of the Hotel Manhattan.

Most of these organizations are strictly lunch clubs. Others burn more incense to the great god Lunch than to any other deity.

THE LUNCH CLUB A CHECK ON BUSINESS LIFE.

By analyzing the growth and character of such clubs, many of which are fitted out with every comfort and luxury, the observer could learn much about business conditions and tendencies. He could see in the lunch club a check on the rapidity of business life, for bankers, brokers, financiers and professional men of all sorts are displaying a growing desire for a two-hour truce at midday. Some of them are going more frequently to their uptown clubs for luncheon. Others are going to the Crescent Athletic Club, in Brooklyn, to secure a complete respite from work and worry. A famous lunch club of the city, where members are wealthy men and represent the warring factions of Wall Street, has made it an unwritten law to do away with shop talk within its walls. Even the reading of newspapers is discountenanced there. Art, science and literature are the favorite subjects. Tickers are banned. Another lunch club has a well-equipped gymnasium, and business men can work off avoirdupois on automatic exercisers. Many of the clubs have excellent libraries. Almost all of them are open to women friends and relatives. Some have been the favorite retreats for the most famous literary, artistic and scientific men in the world. Their facilities for entertaining are wide and varied, and there is a constant interchange of visiting among their members.

MENUS ARE NOW TRANSLATED FOR PUZZLED FOLKS.

There is also a growing tendency to simplicity. French menus are no more. Certain well-known clubs have looked the carte du jour squarely in the face and decided on English. In other clubs there is printed for the benefit of busy members a translation of some of the more puzzling terms that all chefs are fond of employing when the cost of living demands hash and hash must make a fashionable debut. Take the Union League Club as an example. It is superfluous to say that the Union League Club is not a lunch club, but there is a certain engaging frankness in the methods that it employs. The translation is framed every day and hung on the wall for all to read. Under the club monogram is typewritten:

"EXPLANATORY

"Sunday, December 13.

"LUNCH

"Argentine—With eggplant, green pepper, Madeira sauce around.

"Chasseur—Claret wine sauce, shallots, glazed onions, minced ham, fresh mushrooms."

In the Downtown Club we learn that an omelet "a la Turque" signifies "With chicken livers and mushrooms." And staring upon the menu is the explanation that "cold eggs mollet, Norfolk," means a solo of egg soft boiled upon tomato, with an accompaniment of crab flake salad and mayonnaise.

A steward who has had thirty years of restaurant experience, who has ladled out nightingales' tongues at Sherry's and who is now employed by one of the best known downtown lunch clubs, commented on the change that had come over the habits of business men in the last few years. They are eating less at noon, he said, and eating simpler food.

The pates, cepes, truffles, mushroom gravies, lobster Newburgs and French frills with which they whiled away the noon hour and cajoled prospective customers some years ago have disappeared. Wine is now the exception and not the tule. The midday repast has been transformed into a meal, for it frequently consists of rice and milk. The steward had even figured out the change on a financial basis, for where a lunch used to cost a couple of dollars five years back, the sum of 60 cents is now a high average.

The character of the metropolitan lunch club is frequently distinctive, though not always in accordance with its name. In the Lawyers' Club, for example, you see literary celebrities, soldiers, sailors, railroad men and merchants. Here and there, if you look carefully, you may find a lawyer. Most of these, however, are lunching at the Transportation Club, the Aldine Club, the Hardware Club, the Whitehall Club or the Midday Club.

The Aldine Association, originally a club for publishers, printers and bookbinders, entertains a number of its members every noon. Many of them are merchants. The Transportation Club, supposedly a railroad club for New York Central officials and men whose work takes them frequently to the Grand Central Station, has a large number of brokers, business and professional men among its members.

It is hard to pick out the most famous downtown lunch club. All of them are varied and adapted to separate needs. Among the hoary pioneers which flourished after the Civil War were the former Zodiac and Titans' clubs, and the Downtown Association. The Zodiac Club was perhaps the initial lunch club. Some fifty life insurance presidents, judges, bankers and other reputables were among its members. They met in a café. The Titans' Club was a curious organization. Only tall men were eligible, and the height of six feet two inches was necessary for membership. Large meals were consumed.

Among the present lunch clubs the Downtown Association is one of the oldest. It is dignified with a building all its own. Its membership is cosmopolitan, including all leading professions. Its quarters are luxurious and comfortable, with the air of repose about them that is suited to an organization that was incorporated at the beginning of the Civil War.

The Lawyers Club, established in 1887, had sumptuous quarters in the former Equitable Building. Ostensibly for lawyers, it became one of the most famous literary and artistic resorts of the city. Mark Twain was frequently seen there at luncheon. So was Howells. Henry James liked to go there. Sir Gilbert Parker was entertained there. The staff of Harper's met there for luncheon every day but Saturday, and through Colonel Harvey a meeting took place there between Woodrow Wilson and the New Jersey Democratic leaders. The Lawyers Club came into the public eye at the time of the Equitable fire, when it was left homeless, and eight other downtown clubs extended their privileges to its members. As soon as possible it moved into its new quarters, on the twentieth and twenty-first floors of the United States Realty Company building, at 115 Broadway, quarters that cost its members the sum of $250,000.

When the publishers moved uptown, hotly pursued by garment manufacturers, the Aldine Club tried to follow them, but became tired and stopped at 23d st. Its membership has changed of late, in that literary men are only in partial evidence. The cloth men and the silk men have entered its portals. This club was incorporated in 1889. Among its founders were W. W. Appleton, Henry C. Bunner, Frank H. Scott and Arthur H. Scribner. Its bylaws stated that one of its chief purposes was to encourage literature and art, but its chief end was to supply an attractive and congenial luncheon resort for publishers, authors, printers and bookbinders. It has entertained many notable men, among them being Admiral Peary, Henry M. Stanley, Ian Maclaren, Weir Mitchell, James Barrie, W. D. Howells and Thomas Bailey Aldrich. One of its pleasantest festivals was the dinner given not long ago by authors and artists to Alexander W. Drake, who for forty years conducted the art department of the "Century Magazine."

The same year, that in which the Aldine Club first saw light, brought forth the Fulton Club, that used to hold its meetings in the old United States Hotel. The Hardware Club, established two years later, was intended to be an Aldine Club of tin and brass, and to do for the hardware trade what the Aldine Club had done for the literary trade. Boss Murphy and Mayor McClellan smoked the pipe of peace there. Many important meetings of hardware merchants have taken place within its walls, the last of them to discuss the question of how America can secure the hardware trade of Great Britain, formerly controlled by Germany.

The quarters of the Hardware Club are in the Postal Telegraph Building. An extra story has been added for the use of the club, and above that a mezzanine floor for storage. On the roof is an aerial kitchen, where the white wings flap in the ether.

Three years later the Transportation Club came into being, on the top floor of Hotel

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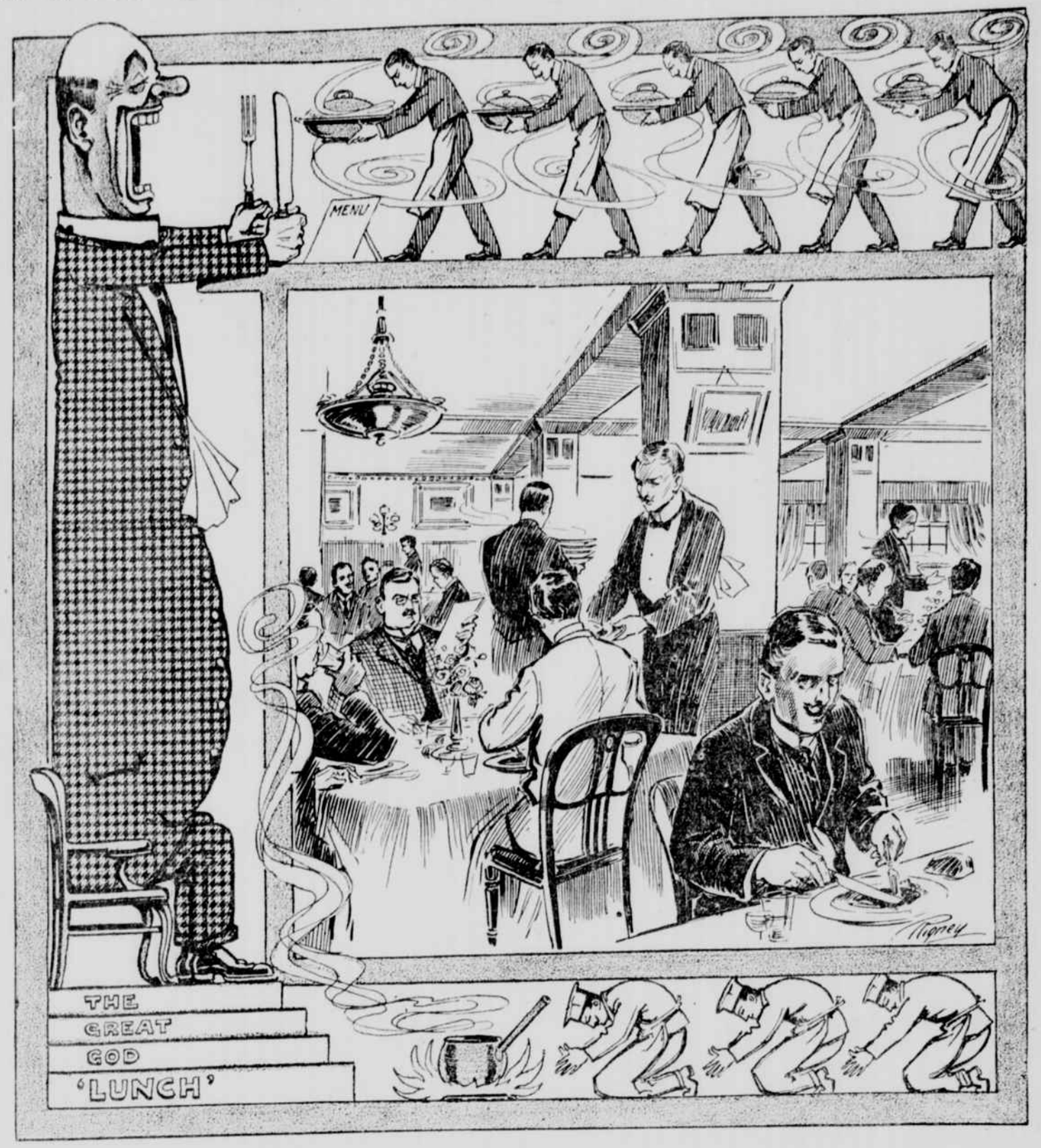

FAMED MIDDAY MEETING PLACES OF ELDER DAYS HAVE A LIVELY GROUP OF RECENT OFFSPRING.

LECTURES OF POLITICAL EDUCATION LEAGUE PROVE IDEAS ARE POPULAR

A GOOD many of us have heard of the night-blooming cereus. It is a species of cactus in whose life darkness plays the part that sunlight does in the lives of most other subjects of the vegetable kingdom. It welcomes darkness, expands in it, becomes its old self, like some members of the human family we know, once the sun has set over the rim of the desert and plunged the tropical world into sudden night.

Not long ago the sun of civilization set over the rim of a desert, a desert of wholesale bankruptcy and human woe, and such flowers as the theatre and the opera, not to mention a multitude of others dependent on its rays, have languished. But in proportion as they have wilted and drooped the institution of the lecture, the serious lecture (the pun is unintentional and unavoidable), has thriven like the night-blooming cereus.

In proof of which let any doubting Thomas proceed on a Monday, Tuesday or Thursday morning about 11 o'clock to West 47th st. He will find this cross street choked with automobiles from Sixth av. to Broadway. On some mornings they will be found to lie three abreast along either curb and to be parked in Seventh av. besides, while those who occupied them are making part of a lecture audience which packs the Cort Theatre. On Saturday mornings, at the same time, it is 44th st. which appears to contain all the automobiles in the land. Much the same audience is listening to a lecture in the Hudson Theatre. And this has been going on since November and will continue into April.

A POPULARITY WHICH ONE IS UNABLE TO EXPLAIN.

The League for Political Education conducts these lectures. Their subjects are exceedingly varied, but all educational, ranging from French literature to welfare work among the slums and, of course, taking in all those questions of public moment to stimulate interest in which the league was originally founded. Yet, notwithstanding the excellence and widespread reputation of the lecturers, one finds it rather hard to understand their great popularity among well-to-do New Yorkers, a people supposedly given to treating "highbrows" and their views with indulgent scorn.

But the phenomenon has been noted before. The league was founded and got its start in the year 1894, shortly after the worst financial panic which the present generation remembers. Then, as now, a darkness had settled over the human mind. Again, in 1907, almost immediately after the disastrous panic of that year, the league opened its course of lectures, only to find its membership greatly increased. It throve on the gloom which made a long Arctic night of that winter. This winter, according to Robert Erskine Ely, the league's director, it has been found very difficult to avoid overcrowded audiences and consequent violation of those theatre and auditorium ordinances which the league has consistently upheld and applauded.

The explanation cannot be said to lie in the fact that these lectures cost less than the theatre and opera, since those who make up so much of the audiences are well able to go to theatre and opera, regardless of the financial depression, or they wouldn't have chauffeurs in limousines waiting to take them home. It must be rather that the intrusion of grave public problems upon their consciousness at such a time turns their thoughts to serious things. The mood merely to be entertained leaves them, and they seek to harmonize themselves with a community which is going through what a man does when he wakes up in the middle of the night and lies staring into the dark, unable to fall asleep again, his brain sharply outlining for him his sins of omission and commission and their logical outcome. For members of a community in this state of mind lectures on contemporaneous social ills provide something of the emotional relief to be got from the confessional.

In addition there is a certain feeling of virtue in taking one's recreation, whatever it is, in the morning, particularly for those who have been in the habit of taking it at night. It gives one a sweet sense of reformation, leading, as it does, to no indigestible suppers or injuriously late hours. Incidentally, one is getting a big value for $10—but incidentally.

The regular membership fee for the season is $10. This permits the subscriber to attend all the regular morning lectures and to go on the educational excursions conducted every Friday to some point of historic interest or institution of importance. Then there is a subscription membership to be had for $25, which entitles one to admission to all special lectures as well as to all the regular lectures and excursions and to a reserved seat besides at all the lectures. A special membership for teachers and those engaged professionally in philanthropic or religious work gives admission to the Saturday morning lectures and the Friday educational excursions, the annual dues being $3. And then there are the two extremes of membership, those who pay $100 because they can spare the money and want to see the league prosper, and the settlement workers, who pay nothing. There are nine of the former and something like 500 of the latter. In all the memberships this year reach a total of 2,500.

It is hardly necessary to say that 95 per cent of the members are women. That is as it should be. The league was founded by a woman for women. At least it was the need for more information on public questions among women which prompted its establishment, though a few men who are free in the morning to attend lectures have joined and been welcomed.

It was just following a state constitutional convention, like the one to be held next autumn, that the idea of the thing came to the late Mrs. Henry M. Sanders, whose husband was pastor of the Madison Avenue Baptist Church. Mrs. Sanders—a woman of considerable wealth, the daughter of Theron Butler, a famous old New York merchant of a former generation—and several other women of prominence in the city had been backing an effort to amend the constitution at this convention in favor of woman suffrage. The attempt was badly defeated, and they came to the conclusion that the apathy of most of their sisters in the state, which they held responsible for the defeat, arose from the almost total lack of knowledge or interest in current affairs among women. The women of New York must be educated in these things, they said, if it takes decades to do it.

But very wisely Mrs. Sanders did not found a suffrage propagandist society. Instead she decreed that on the question of suffrage and on all other controversial points the league should take a strictly non-partisan position, invite lecturers to speak on all sides and seek only to impart information for its own sake. To-day some very strong anti-suffragists are members of the league as well, of course, as a much larger element of suffragists. Mr. Ely receives letters often on the same day criticising the league for its pro-suffrage stand and for its anti-suffrage leanings, for its radicalism and for its conservatism, for siding with this element and for siding with its opponents. He thinks, and he has a right to, that one could have no better proof of the impartiality, strict neutrality, of his organization.

Mrs. Sanders found a great many persons eager to see a lecture league succeed who yet thought success in New York impossible. "You cannot get New Yorkers to attend lectures," they said. But Mrs. Sanders had faith, and she picked a fortunate time, though she didn't realize it, in which to launch her project. But even the depression following the financial panic of 1893 could not change the nature of the New Yorker overnight, and the lecture attendance, to begin with, was not flattering. Indeed, for the first few years Mrs. Sanders "carried" the league all alone. Gradually, however, it struck root and, aided by an occasional long night of gloom and not a few twilights, it has grown into one of the city's permanent institutions, though not yet entirely self-supporting. Its annual budget amounts now to about $18,000 or $20,000, and it even has a small endowment of $30,000, which it does not touch, but seeks to increase into a sum the income from which will be a decided help.

Mrs. Sanders was the first president of the League. With her were associated Miss Adele M. Fielde, the first secretary; Mrs. Robert Abbe, the late Dr. Mary Putnam-Jacobi, Mrs. Lucia Gilbert Runkle and Mrs. Ben Ali Haggin. To-day the officers are Robert Erskine Ely, director; Mary B. Cleveland, executive secretary; Christine L. Munger, secretary to the director, and Evelyn L. Shulters, membership secretary. Some of the present patrons of the league are: Mrs. J. P. Morgan and her two daughters, Mrs. William Pierson Hamilton and Miss Anne Morgan; Mrs. Andrew Carnegie, Mrs. Samuel Untermyer, Mrs. Charles B. Alexander, Mrs. Henry A. Alexander and Mrs. Warner M. Leeds.

Among the men and women who have spoken from its platform in the twenty years of its life are President Wilson, ex-President Roosevelt, Secretary Bryan, Joseph H. Choate, Nicholas Murray Butler, Jane Addams, Ida M. Tarbell, Helen Keller, Felix Adler, Stephen S. Wise, the late Edward Everett Hale, the late Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Rear Admiral Robert E. Peary, Margaret Deland, Viscount Bryce, Frederic Harrison, Mrs. Humphry Ward, John Oliver Hobbes (Mrs. Craigie), Ellen Terry and Prince Peter Kropotkin. This year's list of lecturers includes Cecil Chesterton, Jerome K. Jerome, Winston Churchill, Irving Bacheller, ex-Governor Herbert S. Hadley, Senator Thomas P. Gore, Commissioner Katharine B. Davis, Margaret Deland, Professor Albert Bushnell Hart, Mrs. Havelock Ellis, Josephine Preston Peabody, Mary Antin, George A. Birmingham, Samuel McChord Crothers, Ray Stannard Baker, Judge Ben B. Lindsay, Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, Mrs. A. J. George, John Graham Brooks, Charles Zueblin, George Creel, John Cowper Powys, Edward Howard Griggs, and others.

Now the women who hear these lecturers do not keep what they have heard to themselves any more than if it were all gossip. They pass a lot of it on to their tired, busy husbands, much more than the latter will acknowledge. In fact, the league may be said to outwit the tired business man of New York. Though he can't attend its lectures and wouldn't if he could, though he may look on the whole thing as a woman's scheme, academic, dilettante, suffragistic, hardly worthy of his notice, yet he is forced to benefit by it through social contact with its members. He may be seated next to one at dinner at night, and she, astonishingly nimble witted like most New York women, full of some idea novel to her which she has imbibed at the lecture fount in the morning, will impart her information to him, provoke him into an argument, make him parade forth his poor little stock of ideas on the subject just to make a showing before a woman; and finally she will insert her shining idea among the dim children of his mind, so that without knowing it he takes it home with him and later gives it an airing as one of his own.

What, learn that from a woman? Not on your life!

Ah, well, let him glory in his larceny if only he considers his loot worth while. That, at least, is Mr. Ely's attitude. "Most ideas," Mr. Ely says, "are spread through social contact." He and the league are content to start them spreading.

ROBERT ERSKINE ELY.